

My interest in the outdoors dates back to my early boyhood. My mother being country born and still having relatives living in Lauder and Oxton on the fringe of the Lammermuir Hills, I was introduced to country life and walking in the country from a very early age. But I would be about 12 years old, perhaps even less, walking the hills and dales of the Lammermuirs on my own. That was from the time I started going for my summer holidays on my own. These holidays were spent in Oxton, a tiny village, four miles from Lauder. Uncle Willae and Aunt Jenny, my father's only sister, had a house on the Row. My uncle was a tailor and was an original Oxtonian. Both were true country folk and encouraged me in my wanderings. Before long I was going off on my own for the whole day. My aunt would pack a haversack with home-baked scones and a bag of sweets, always Liquorice Allsorts, and I would happily spend the whole day on my own wandering over the moors.

From my father and my uncle and aunt I learned all the places they had gone in their younger days and I searched them out for myself. I walked to Lammerlaw, the highest peak in the lammermuirs, walked over the hills to Fountainhall as my father ~~had~~ had done when he first came to Oxton from Edinburgh as a young man. Soon my uncle, who was a keen and accomplished fisherman himself, gave me a fishing rod and a set of flies which added yet a further thrill to my wanderings. I must have fished all the most ~~likely~~ likely and the most unlikely burns for miles around Oxton. These are my happiest childhood memories and I was never lonely, never, on my own. And in the late afternoon when I came home to tell them where I had all been, my uncle and aunt would listen attentively and add little stories about these places to add to my pleasure. They had no children of their own, but they ~~me~~ gave to me all the love and understanding any child could have.

~~In July~~ In July 1929 I climbed my first real mountain, Ben More at Crianlarich. The Summer Camp of the 3rd. Glasgow Boy's Brigade was held that year at Luib, midway between Killin and Crianlarich and the highlight was the ascent of Ben More.

Considering all the officers were town bred and none, as far as I know, had any hill-walking experience whatsoever, it was, to say the least, a daft thing to do. Not that it was ill planned. Capt. Borelnd had been an officer in the Camel Corp in the First World War and he saw to that. We all had our sandwiches in our little white sachels, we had our medical orderly, the captain's son ~~he~~ who was in his second year medical studies, with his first-aid equipment in a haversack. Furthermore, we were not permitted to wear our sandshoes. We had to wear stout shoes, which meant our town shoes. There wasn't a boot, far less a climbing boot amongst the lot of us.

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We marched as a company in columns of four along the road to Rob Roy's farm and then started the ascent in a long crocodile line with an officer in the lead. Another officer brought up the rear to shepherd the stragglers, ~~which~~ which became greater by the minute.

Of the ascent I can only remember it as being long, tedious and uninspiring. However, in the goodness of time the whole company reached the summit. We were duly photographed at the cairn, though I don't recall ever seeing the photograph.

Not far below the ~~summit~~ summit on the N. face was a large patch of snow which had an immediate fascination for us youngsters who had never had a snow-ball fight in mid summer in our lives. The officers, in their ignorance, succumbed to our pleas and it was decided that the descent would be made down that side of the mountain to include the snow patch. There was no marked path down that side, nor if I recall, even a clear view down the mountain, but this did not seem to mean anything to the officers. This side of the mountain is so much steeper than the route we had come up, ~~rockier~~ It is rockier and has loose screes. Certainly no place for a bunch of town bred boys and novice officers.

We never did reach the snow and, indeed, I think we were lucky to reach the bottom without mishap. Most of us enjoyed the descent and some of us, much to the distress of the officers, found that it was easier and infinitely more fun to take the slopes at a run.

Once safely back on the road we formed ranks with the officers properly distributed and Capt. Berland in the lead to march the weary miles back to camp. The officers, as was their duty, kept rallying us with marching songs, (~~World War I~~ World War I. was still a recent memory to some of them) and from time to time they would shout, "Are we down hearted?", to which our small group of non-conformists in the ranks would shout back "Yes". It was great fun.

910 I, myself, had'nt found it a very tiring day and all of us were as active as ever the next day. Only the officers, as the saying goes, were out of the game.

On a July day in 1934 Jim, my brother, and I had taken a turn out to Ballogiech Hill beyond Eaglesham. It was one of these glorious, clear days and we had a wonderful view of the Clyde coast.

This so fired my imagination that the following morning, with 2/6p. in my pocket, I caught morning tram from Mount Florida to Clarkston with the intention of walking to the sea.

I was in Eaglesham before the shops had opened, and by 10.30 a.m. I had crossed the Fenwick Moor and had reached Kilmarnock. In those days there was little traffic on the roads, and most of that was horse drawn farm carts. I had a short rest in the park and then walked on through the villages of Crosshouse and Dreghorn to Irvine, which, strictly speaking was on the coast.

However, by now I had made Saltcoats my goal and struck back ~~int~~ inland to Kilwinning, by which time I was tired and my legs ~~very sore~~ very sore. But I was determined to reach Saltcoats.

By the time I reached Stevenson it was painful to walk, painful when I stopped, and more painful when I started again.

About 4 o'clock in the afternoon I reached Saltcoats and limped along to the Plantation at Southbeach, a place I remembered from my earlier boyhood holidays. There I rested until I caught the 6.30 p.m. train home to Glasgow- an evening paper and the train back to Mount Florida used up the last of my 2/6p. (today's equivalent- 13p.)

I could hardly climb up the stairs to my house, but was highly pleased with myself, having walked on my own, nearly 40 mls. just "to be beside the sea".

1935

XX

In April, 1935 Tom Lightbody and I set off for a cycle tour of the Highlands. As usual I had a very clapped-out bike, though that really wasn't so unusual. As far as I can remember all bikes in these days were old. In fact I don't remember anyone who ~~had~~ owned a new bike.

We left at 10.30 a.m. and cycled to Aberfoyle and over the Duke's Pass. Actually we didn't cycle over the Duke's Pass. I had no gears on my bike, I'm not sure about Tom, so we pushed our bikes all the way up. But the trip down to L. Achray was a joy. We could free-wheel down most of the way at horrendous speed. When our speeds got too frightening we used our feet on the wheel rims for maximum brake power. The roads, of course, were almost deserted and pretty rough, not tar macadamed,

We finally stopped for the day outside Strathgryre and pitched our tent in torrential rain. Needless to say, the tent leaked like a sieve and ^{we} only had a couple of army blankets, (sleeping bags were unknown to us.) so we spent a miserably cold night. In fact the cold got us up before sunrise and we walked to Balquidder and back just to get warm. This was before breakfast.

We finally got on our way around 9.30 a.m. and had an easy, but short trip to Lochearnhead. Then it was off the bikes again and pushing them all the way up Glen Ogle. For a cycling tour we were doing an awful lot of walking. However, we were compensated by another glorious free-wheel down the other side. Not as hair-raising as the trip down the Duke's Pass, but anything that required no effort was a bonus.

Through Killin and along L. Tay, with the Tarmachan and Lawers ranges in deep snow and we called it a day in Fortingal where we pitched our tent beside the parson's house. He gave us tea and we had a reasonably comfortable night, though it rained again.

I say a reasonable night, but we were again up before sunrise and walking about to get warm.

Fortingal was a lovely little village but our enthusiasm was at a low ebb and we really didn't give it the attention it deserved.

By 11 a.m. we were packed up and on our way through Glen Lyon.

We had a leisurely and thoroughly enjoyable run through the Glen to L. Lyon which we reached in the late afternoon. Our map showed a track through the hills to Auch "suitable for cyclists" and we believed it. We followed it down to the waters edge where it disappeared into the loch. We found a very rough foot path and

pushed our bikes when we could and ~~carried them~~ carried them when we couldn't, which was most of the time. Darkness overtook us but we just kept staggering on through burns and bogs, sometimes on the path, sometimes losing it, until eventually we reached Auch.

I've no idea what time this was but Auch Farm was in darkness.

We pushed a little longer and reached the old Tyndrum road.

By now our torches were about burned out and we just put the tent up as best we could in the heather. It hadn't, of course, a ~~sewn~~ sewn-in ground sheet, so had great gaping holes all round it, and it was pitched at a crazy angle. But we were too exhausted to even drum-up, we just pulled our blankets around us and collapsed inside. We slept for an hour or two from sheer exhaustion but the cold and the damp woke us again long before sunrise. This was the worst night of the lot and when we were able to see a little around us, we found the snow line just above us and patches of snow all around.

All our clothes were soaking and we were too cold to even make breakfast. We just bundled everything up and as soon as it was light enough to see the road we started for home. ~~With~~ Neither of us had much feeling in our hands or feet but with a down-hill run to Tyndrum we just sat on our bikes and let them go as fast as they wished.

The sunrise, at least, was a spectacular one. The sun was completely encircled by a rainbow and on either side, on the rainbow, was another smaller image of the sun. And if that was not enough, there was another rainbow arc ~~above~~ above all this with yet another inverted rainbow touching it

Miserable as we were, we were still able to wonder at it, and I have never seen the like of it since

Gradually we began to get some life into our legs and just kept going on and on. By ten ~~was~~ o'clock we had reached Tarbert, sufficiently thawed out to make ourselves some breakfast. Thus fortified, we more or less kept going non-stop, getting back to Mount Florida around 4.30 p.m., shattered.

I enjoyed ~~seeing~~ what we had seen, the mountains had looked exciting and inviting, but the way we had seen them was plain misery. I had had cycle touring in Scotland, Indeed, I had had cycling, period.

However, as the summer of that year drew on I started taking the tram out to Hillfoot and walking around Muggdock and the Campsies, mostly on my own. The tram fare from Mount Florida was 2¹/₂p. so there was little expense involved, and the trams left Mount Florida in the Morning.

Later that year, I took an early bus to Lennextown and took a side road up towards the hills above. It was marked "Private Road", a much more daunting ~~sign~~ sign then than today, and it is a small measure of my independence that I should ignore it. The slopes of hills above were steep, rocky and very, very loose but I chose the most direct route up, i.e. straight up, and though I had a few anxious moments, I found myself enjoying the rock-scrabbling. This, I think, was the beginning of my love of the rocks. Once on the summit I kept going until I dropped down to the Crow Road. Then on again over the tops until I was looking down on Blane field. Here I met an old hill-walker, very impressive he looked to me in his Norfolk jacket, breeches and ~~hairy~~ NAILED BOOTS- ~~that~~ that really impressed me.

He told me he had been tramping the Campsies for 40 years and was happy to tell me all the mountains we were seeing from above Jennie's Lumb. He was ~~particularly~~ particularly excited that day because he was seeing the Galloway Hills for the first time.

I carried on myself over Slackdhu and on to Dumgoyne, which I climbed direct over rotten rocks and loose scree. It was a daft, if not dangerous thing to do, ~~as~~ but I was already a "rock climber" and thought that this was the way mountains were climbed. The views North were exciting and already I was extending my ambitions.

I was now so enthusiastic about mountaineering that I even descended Dumgoyne by the same route. This was ~~was~~ more stupid than the ascent but I didn't know any better and enjoyed it so much. I descended to the valley and walked across the moors to Milngavie, where I got a bus to Glasgow and the tram home. I had been on my own from dawn to dusk, except for meeting the chap on the Campsies, but was filled with enthusiasm to get into the real mountains.

Later that summer, while on holiday in Lauder, I was able to take my brother, 8 years older than myself, for a near 30 mile walk over the Lammermuirs, my earlier stomping ground.

I was now really sold on "hiking" ~~byxx~~ and was away on my own at every opportunity. However, one Wednesday in August I persuaded my brother to come along. Again it was the first tram from Mount Florida and we were in Milngavie by 7.30 in the morning. We walked over ~~x~~ moors to Carbeth where we got a lift to Balfour, and then by various shortcuts we reached Lix Toll. From there we got a bus to Aberfoyle and then walked over the Duke's Pass to Achray Hotel. We carried on along the path behind the hotel towards Ben Venue but torrential rain forced us to seek shelter and we lunched on soggy sandwiches and luke warm tea, getting wetter and wetter by the minute. Eventually we called it a day and set off for home. At Aberfoyle we found that we had three hours to wait for the next bus, so we saved our money by walking to Lix Toll. There we caught the bus to Carbeth and walked back to Hillfoot for the tram home. Poor Jim was crippled with awful blisters on both feet but I felt fine.

We had walked just over 30 miles and I, at least, had enjoyed every moment of it.

I was now going out to the Campsie whenever I possibly ~~could~~ ~~mostly~~ could, mostly on my own. I climbed the face of Slack Dhu and scared the wits out of myself on the loose upper bands. I did the same again on Dumgoyne but on the descent, quite by accident, I landed on the screes where, after the first few cautious steps, I learned the sheer joy of scree-running. It was so exciting that I repeated it over and over again. To this day I still enjoy a wild scree run.

Soon I got my first climbing boots, ordinary heavy boots which I nailed with clinkers myself. I had arrived.

I found the fine clean rocks around Jennie's Lumb, chimneys, faces and cracks and genuine rock pitches. This was so different from the frantic scrabbling up loose rock that I had imagined was climbing and that was when I knew I wanted to take up rock climbing above anything else.

In early January 1936 Tom Lightbody and I walked from Milngavie to Creag Dubh Hostel at L. Achray. The following day we climbed Ben Ledi our first winter climb, and I was in shorts and Tom in his kilt. At least we both had on climbing boots. This was my first taste of the dreary, tiresome ploughing through deep soft snow and then the delight of gaining hard crisp snow where your nails could bite into. It was a wonderful new experience. It was bitterly cold on the summit but the views in every direction were fantastic. Looking south over Glasgow we could easily pick out Bannagloch and the mountains all around were snow-packed and sparkling in the sun. Then the clouds began to gather below us and the peaks became white islands in a turbulent white sea. I was enchanted with it all.

On January 2nd. 1936 Tom Lightbody and I caught an early tram from Mount Florida to Milngavie, and at 11 o'clock started on our way to the Trossachs.

We had moderately light packs, Tom was in a kilt and heavy shoes and I was in shorts and climbing boots.

We took the right-of-ways to Carbeth and by other short cuts to Lix Toll where we had a break. It was thick mist to Gartmore, then heavy rain which cleared as we reached Aberfoyle.

We were still going well over the Duke's Pass, in fact, we were going better than our previous trip on our bikes.

The mists were settling down in the valleys, and, in the twilight from the summit of the Duke's Pass, only the peaks showed up in the dying rays of the sun, deep in snow and gloriously pink.

But darkness fell quickly and we had a bit of difficulty finding the path down to the hostel. We were making heavy weather of it now but a weak moon made an appearance and we saw the lights of Creag Dhu Hostel.

Only two others were in the hostel so we had a great meal without any hassle and dried out at a roaring fire. Later we had a walk along to the Trossachs Hotel and were back in our bunks with all the spare blankets piled on top of us by 9 p.m.

It was 10 o'clock next morning before we awoke but we breakfasted quickly and set off for Ben Ledi.

We went up Glen Finglas, into Gleann Casaig and tackled Ben Ledi direct. We reached the snow line quickly, but the snow was very soft and up to our thighs in places. It was very tiring and we had to take turns in breaking a trail, not the most pleasant of tasks in shorts or a kilt. In time the snow began to bear our weight and we were able to make better time. As the angle steepened I, with nailed boots, moved into the leads and kicked steps until we reached the ridge.

We didn't have ice-axes or a rope, and shouldn't have been there at all. But this is the way we learned our climbing in these days, the hard way.

It was easy going up the ridge to the summit but intensely cold. However, we were not entirely ill-equipped for we had scarves and woollen gloves for just such occasions. We were still cold, of course.

The summit cairn was lost in deep snow but we got shelter from the wind in a deep snow bank facing the sun and we were perfectly happy.

Visibility was perfect and we could pick out Ballognoch Hill across Glasgow quite clearly. All around were peak after peak packed with gleaming snow. We had never seen anything like this before and we were thrilled with ourselves.

Clouds were beginning to gather in the valleys below us and with the high wind to hurry them along, we watched them piling up on top of each other like giant waves on a seashore.

It was a wonderful experience for us, watching all this tremendous activity below us from the snug haven in the snow.

We stayed as long as we could on the summit, loath to leave all this wonder. The way was well down and it was very cold when we left the summit to retrace our steps. We must have been very, very tired for the farm down in the glen never seemed to get any nearer. We would avoid looking at it for as long as we could, but still it seemed as far away as ever. But in the end we reached it, passed it and were in Brig O'Turk in time to get bread and pies from a baker's van.

At the hostel we had an enormous meal of pies and beans, followed by bread and cheese and lashings of hot tea. We felt as right as rain again. We even went out for a walk along L. Vennacher to admire B. Ledi now silvery white and gleaming in the moonlight. We felt very pleased with ourselves.

This was my first winter ascent of a mountain and I was filled with enthusiasm for more.

It was a glorious frosty morning as we prepared for home next day. The sun was just beginning to tint the snows of Ben Venue and the sky was a brilliant blue. It made us feel good just to see it and we fairly stormed over the Duke's Pass, not stopping until we reached Gartmore Station.

But the energies of the two previous days was rapidly catching up on us and our stops thereafter became more and more frequent.

Tom was less used to slogging than I was and by the time we reached Strathblane, I was about on my knees. Tom was still on his feet, but just.

It was now darkness and we numbly blundered our way through the right-of-ways, until centuries later, we reached Milngavie. It was with the utmost difficulty that we made the final ~~ascent~~ ascent for the few steps to the upper deck of the tram car.

It had been a great adventure, and we had walked some 80 miles in the three days.

By now, having had to abandon the opportunity of taking a B.Sc. in Forestry, I was working as Assistant Bookkeeper with Ellerman Shipping Line and earning money, not much, but money which was going almost entirely on climbing gear. I had acquired a ruc-sac, stove and sleeping bag. and, late in the summer of '36, I made a major purchase. I bought a Black's "Guinea Minor" tent, AND the latest in oiled fabric groundsheets. As the name suggests, the "Guinea Minor" cost nineteen shillings and sixpence, more, very much more than I was earning per week.

The "Guinea Minor" was really intended as a solo tent and I bought it as such but throughout its long life it rarely to one occupant in it, indeed, on many occasions three of us would ~~crowd~~ crowd into it and consider ourselves comfortable.

Anyway, as soon as as I had finished work on Saturday, I was off to the Campsies to try out my new tent. I went up to Jennie's Lumb ~~and~~ and had a few hours climbing until dusk, when it was time to set up tent for the night. I had had plenty of experience putting up Bell tents in the Boy's Brigade, but a Pup tent in fast growing darkness was another matter. To begin with I couldn't seem to find a suitable site for even a tiny tent like mine. When I had finally decided on a site and got the tent up, I discovered I had selected a very exposed place - the freshening wind proved that. I was learning the hard way as usual.

Having got the tent up in the darkness, I next thought about water for a drum-up, but where was water? I hadn't given it a thought until now. I was still learning.

Eventually, however, I found a small trickle of water and managed a drum-up before getting into my bag for the night.

Not only was the site exposed, the tent was pitched broadside ~~on the slope~~ on a slope and I kept sliding out of the tent. When I learned how to combat this tendency, the ground-sheet started to slide out from below me. (of course, it should have been pegged down - I know that now.)

The site was exposed, sloping and now I discovered it was also very bumpy; there were gaping holes all along the bottom of the eaves. I stuffed as many of them as I could with boots and odd gear and settled down again.

I ~~didn't~~ didn't, of course, drop into a sound sleep; a brilliant Harvest moon was climbing the sky and I used this as an excuse to get into my boots, balaclava, scarf and gloves to have a look.

It was bitterly cold but outstandinly beautiful. So clear that a torch was ~~unnecessary~~ unnecessary. Everything was bathed in silvery light and below me the tiny lochs were like tiny pieces of shattered mirror. Beyond I could see the myriads of tiny, twinkling lights of Glasgow, and beyond, in the distance, the occasional moving ~~lights~~ gleam of car headlights on the hills on the south of the city.

I had never seen anything quite so beautiful before and was enthralled with it. I went for a walk along the top of the Campsie and, below me, my tent, (how tiny it looked,) was clearly visible.

I got back to the tent and into my bag again, but found sleep impossible. I didn't feel lonely, but I was probably excited with "my adventure". I dressed again and had another walk, and a few more before I finally dozed off.

Although I could've had more than a couple of hours sleep I was up again before sunrise, very cold but otherwise feeling fine.

When I stuck my nose out of the tent I found everything white with frost, so thick that I thought at first it was snow. The little trickle of water that I had found the night before was almost frozen solid. By the time I had managed to find a drumful of water I was chattering with cold. But once I got the stove going in the tent, everything was warm and cosy and I had a very happy breakfast.

It was still very early in the morning and I was warm, but I couldn't reconcile this with my new-found role as a hardy outdoor man. So I packed everything up, with my tent conspicuously strapped on top of my pack and set off towards Dungoyne, hoping, I think, to meet someone to tell I had just spent the night camping. Of course there wasn't a soul on the hill; it wasn't yet 7 a.m.

I returned to Jennie's Lumb where I spent another hour improving my rock-climbing technique. It was barely 8 a.m. when I shouldered my pack again and raced down the hill to Blanefield.

I was feeling in tremendous form, and even had a wash-up in the burn before carrying on across the moors towards Mugdock.

My old, school friend and next-door neighbour was coming out to join me for the day. I soon spotted him in the distance right out on the moor, and well off the beaten track, clutching my home-made set of instructions. Oliver was always a fastidious dresser, but had rigged himself out in what he considered the right gear for the occasion - an old tweed jacket, ghastly bluish-purple serge trousers, his father's, a direputable pullover, miles too big for him and on his head a brown soft-hat, without a band. A pipe was jutting out from the side of his mouth.

A serviceable enough rig-out and ~~it was~~ I've seen much worse among my climbing friends. But on Oliver, ... it just didn't fit. However, he was immensely pleased with himself.

We went straight up the hills again to Jennie's Lumb where Oliver got his first taste of rock-climbing and, I think, his last taste.

It was now a glorious warm day and on our way over Slack Dhu, more and more clothes were stripped off and piled on my ruc-sack. Even my tremendous enthusiasm was beginning to wilt under the load.

Not enough, however, to stop us from ~~continuing~~ continuing along the top, down and up Dumgoyne, ~~Dumgoyne, was climbing~~ Dumgoyne was climbed, not by the easy grass slopes, but up the gully and over the rocks on the right. Oliver in front and myself behind to steady him and push him up over the more difficult parts. It just didn't occur to me to go any other way and Oliver didn't know any better anyway. He was getting a tremendous thrill out of it all and I was enjoying it too, pack and all.

We descended by the screes, along the bottom of the crags and over the moors to Milngavie.

It had been a wonderful week-end for me, full of minor adventures, and all so easily and cheaply obtainable.

And I was delighted with my wee tent, although I hadn't really been comfortable. But that was my fault and, later, when I had sewn in the ground sheet and gained a lot more experience, it never let me down.

I didn't get any further opportunity to use the tent until October of that year when I wangled a week's holiday. This was to be my ~~first~~ first big climbing expedition and I wrote it up at great length. It's a naive description of a ~~not too~~ not too outstanding trip, but, to me, it was a major break-through. I headed the account thus:

"A Week of Tramping and Climbing in Scotland."

3RD. to 10th. October, 1936.

Sat. 3rd. Oct.

I left the office today in a rush, in fact, everything felt rushed today. To begin with I had to run like mad for my train home and spent the journey feverishly trying to remember all I had to take with me. I hadn't even started packing, and my mother was still knitting heavy woollen stockings for me as I sat down for lunch.

My outfit consisted of a woollen shirt, riding breeches, (my father's), thin under-socks, thick woollen stockings, (my mother had managed to finish them in time,) and climbing boots. Over and above this I wore a thick, woollen sweater and my climbing jacket, (an old cast-off Norfolk of my uncle's). IN my ruc-sack I was carrying, apart from tent, sleeping-bag and groundsheet, a spare shirt, spare socks., balaclava and gloves. In the way of provisions, I had a pound of cold ham, which, incidentally, went bad, a half pound of butter, a small tin of cocoa, a tin of six Oxo cubes plus banana and date sandwiches for two days. I also had matches, candles, tobacco ~~and my pipe~~ and my pipe.

It was a rush to get a tram into Glasgow, a rush to get up to the Bus Station at Buchanan Street to get a bus to Drymen and a struggle to get on the bus. Everybody seemed to be carrying packs as big as mine.

Whilst stopping at Halfway we witnessed a man being knocked down by a speeding car and I was more than ever convinced that my route lay off the beaten track. There was another mad scramble to change buses at Drymen, before we could take to the road at Aberfoyle.

Here I palled up with a school teacher and we chatted all the way over the Duke's Pass to Creag Dhu Hostel. He had ~~just~~ spent a week tramping in Norway that year.

I listened avidly to his account. This was big stuff to me. My uncle had travelled abroad a lot on business, but to go abroad for tramping, (hiking was not yet a name,); this was a new dimension. I was already trying to work out how I could do this. Everything I heard about the out-doors I wanted to do, my ambitions were limitless.

At Creag Dhu Hostel my companion left me and I carried on to Brig O'Turk. It was now 5.30 p.m. and I had planned to get the 9 a.m. train at Strathyre the following morning.

I bashed on up Glen Finglas to Duart Farn, then started up Gleann Casaig in the fading light. I soon lost whatever path there was, but felt I should keep near the burn for direction. It was very, very ~~xx~~ hard going and I was desperately weary when I finally reached the upper corrie. It was now almost ~~dark~~ and I couldn't find anywhere to pitch the tent on the steep hill-side. I was past the stage of tiredness, just pushing myself on a step at a time. However, just below the bealach between Ben Vane and Ben Ledi I gave up and put up the tent. It was now too ~~dark~~ to see, but I couldn't care less. The tent went up anyway it could. The moon came out spasmodically and I could see herds of deer milling around my tent. The stags were roaring continually, but I didn't give it a thought. I was too tired.

I had a meal, an Oxo cube and a couple of sandwiches. I hadn't eaten since lunchtime. I was too tired and, by now, too cold to do ~~any~~ better. However, in the right tradition, I wrote by candle light, all I had done and seen that day - adventures out of nothing.

I was worried about wakening in time to get down to Strathyre next morning for the train. I needn't have worried, I was up at the first crack of dawn. Even so, I packed up everything immediately, not even bothering to have something to eat, and ~~xx~~ slowly made my way up to the ridge. It was a cold, crisp morning and the valley below was shrouded in thick white clouds, and I was awful, awful tired - and the last of the banana sandwiches were bad - and I was still worried about the train. Since I couldn't think of anything else to do, I just started straight down the steep hillside in the general direction of Strathyre, slidig, running, rolling - just anyway I could to get to Strathyre in time for the train. Once in Strathyre, very early in the morning, I discovered that the clock had changed, and I had all the time in the world.

Strathyre was deserted, but, at last, I saw a lady come to her door and asked if there was anywhere i could get a light breakfast. She must have felt sorry for me - I suppose I did look pretty forlorn - for she invited me into the kitchen and got the fire going. She prepared a pot of tea, with bread, butter and jam and I began to feel human again. She diffidently charged me sixpence for my breakfast, but I gave ner a shilling, the smallest I had in my pocket.

Right on time the train pulled into the empty station and I took it to Killin Junction. Here the guard collared me for one shilling and fivepence, the fare from Strathyre to Killin Junction. No ticket was given. Killin has, I believe, the unique distinction of being the only station in Scotland without a road leading to it.

I walked along the line and then onto the road into Killin. Everything seemed to interest me at that time. I stopped and drew a pencil sketch of the war memorial because I had'nt seen one like it before. I sketched the inscriptions from two tombstones in the burial ground og Clan McNab. ~~I wrote~~ I wrote about everything I saw. I was a one-man, walking guide book. Anything new was exciting.

I walked through Killin and immediately cut up onto the hills again. My route took me over Meall nan Tarmachan down to Lochan na ~~Kilg~~ Lairige road and then up the glen towards Beinn Ghlas. I made the Scottish Ski Club hut just before dark, could'nt force an entry by door or window, so, after frightening off a herd of deer, I ptched tent. I had'nt eaten since Strathyre and I don't think I had much left to eat that night either.

I was cold through the night and, as usual, up at the first light of dawn. It was ~~misty~~ misty and chilly so I just packed up and started up the hill, climbed over Beinn Ghlass and on to the summit of Ben Lawers. It was still early morning. On ~~Lawers~~ Lawers I breakfasted on ice crystals, oxo cubes and loaf sugar.

Thus fortified, I carried on over Meall Garbh, over Meall Gruaidh and eventually into Fortingall.

It was in the village shop that I met the Rev. Dr. W. Cowan. He hefted my pack, commented on the weight and asked where I had come from, and where I was going. When he heard I was going to camp he immediately suggested that I might be more comfortable in his house. I accepted without reservation. He had done a lot of travelling throughout Scotland and had written a pleasant little book entitled, "Rambles through Scotland among the Bens and Glens,". I still have an autographed copy, but more important, I got tea, dinner, a nice room and breakfast the next morning, Kneeling for prayers before dinner did'nt seem to big a price to pay for this hospitality.

In the morning, after breakfast, he gave me a conducted tour of the church and the graveyard for which Fortingall is renowned.

Walked leisurely through Glen Lyon, searching out all the places that Dr. Cowan had mentioned, and called it a day a mile or two from L. Lyon. I was getting soft, for I found a shepherd and his wife who would put me up for the night.

The shepherd, naturally, was delighted to have an audience, a captive audience you might say, for I wasn't going any further that night. According to the shepherd, the cottage was on the site where one, Sir Robert Campbell was born and who, subsequently, as a member of the Hudson Bay Company, was the first white man to discover gold in the Klondyke. So the shepherd said.

There was an enormous, stuffed eagle on the stairhead as I went into my attic room and an eagle's nest was pointed out to me the next morning. This was all heady stuff to me. In addition I had an enormous supper and a huge breakfast, plus a bag of sandwiches which was more than I had eaten since I left Glasgow. All this cost two shillings and sixpence.

The next day, feeling in better shape than when I had left Glasgow, I climbed up the Glen from Pùibh, over Ben Heasgarnich, down to the head of Glen Lochy and through the glen to Crianlarich. The first thing I did there was to post my tent home - I really was ~~going~~ getting soft.

I booked into the Hostel and had a very relaxed night. The next morning I again pampered myself by accompanying Laurence Dane, an American who lived in Paris, for breakfast at Mrs. Malloch's ~~hotel~~ hotel. I had met the American in the hostel.

It was ~~late~~ late in the morning when I left Crianlarich and climbed Ben More from the farm and with a lighter pack found it no more than a long, relentless slog. I carried on over Stobinian, Stob Coire an Lochan and descended to Monachyle via Meall Monachyle.

I was away early the following morning to walk through the glen to loch Katrine and on to Creag Dhubh Hostel. It was a longish walk, but not very strenuous. However, I seemed to find it interesting enough, for I recorded everything I had seen. I must have felt like an explorer. Everything was new and exciting to me.

On my last day of my holiday I climbed over Ben Venue and eventually down into Aberfoyle for the bus home.

It had been an exciting holiday, though I can't honestly say I enjoyed every minute of it. There had been times when I had been too cold and too tired to enjoy anything, but I had never been lonely nor discouraged. Tiredness and cold were just things I accepted.

On the first of January, 1937 I caught the first train in the morning to Crianlarich and was in the Hostel by 8 a.m. Having learned a little about the mountains in winter from last New Year with Tom Lightbody, I wore breeches, not shorts, and had equipped myself with a sturdy walking stick, (it has been brought back from Switzerland by my uncle, so I guess I thought it O.K. for the Scottish mountains in winter.)

I marvel now when I think back on these days, and how easy it was to get about without transport of your own. I had caught a train at 4.15 on New Year's morning, changed at Stirling and was in Crianlarich at 7.30 a.m. Better still, I had got an all-night tram from Mount Florida in time to catch the train.

I don't know what I was intending to do. I suppose, being on my own as usual, I was going to climb mountains by myself. Why else would I have brought along a stout walking stick - with a SPIKE on it.

As it was, I was saved from my own folly. At breakfast I met two Langside chaps, Duncan McCallum and Russell Marshall, who invited me to join them. And I had the good sense to accept. Both lads were a bit ~~old~~

~~It was raining~~
~~thax~~ older than myself and already had a Winter Season behind them.

It was raining heavily and was bitterly as we crossed the moor and climbed the ridge of Stob Garbh. I had left my Balaclava behind and at that time didn't possess an anorak, just my uncle's old norfolk. I was miserably cold, but it didn't seem to occur to me to turn back.

On the ridge a near-gale was blowing and the icy-rain had turned to driving snow, but we managed to get a welcome break in the lee of a big rock on the bealach between Stob Garbh and Cruach Arden.

We started up Cruach Arden by a snow-packed gully and, after 100 ft. or so, we roped up. I had never been on a rope before, nor, for that matter been in a snow gully before. I was immensely impressed with my companions professionalism. Duncan and Russell had elected to leave their ice-axes behind, I don't know why, and my walking stick was hidden under my bunk.

The snow was hard enough to kick steps and, although the angle was steep ~~enough~~ enough at places, we made the ascent without any trouble. I was even allowed to come from the end of the rope and lead. I was thrilled. We should all have had ice-axes with us, if only for belays, but I didn't know any better and one winter season wasn't enough experience for Duncan and Marshall. We were all enjoying ourselves immensely.

From the summit of Cruach Arden we, briefly, considered going on to Ben Tulachan but, in even less time, abandoned the idea. Instead we made the easy descent to the road by the Grey Heights. It was snow and driving rain all the way back to the hostel, but it was two new Munro's for all three of us.

In our absence the hostel had filled up with climbers and the place was a complete clutter ropes, boots, ice-axes and the inevitable mass of smelly, wet clothes.

The plan for the morrow was Central Gully, Ben Lui, which meant nothing to me but sounded good.

Duncan aroused me at 6 a.m. and one by one the other enthusiasts stumbled heavy eyed, half-dressed into the common-room to wrestle with ~~recalcitrant~~ recalcitrant Primus stoves and stubborn hostel fires. Almost everyone was miserable - our clothes were still wet - the confusion was appalling - and then someone announced that we had a minute to catch the train.

It would have been simple and sensible to have let the train go, but what we all did was to grab our gear, stick our feet into unlaced boots and race up in the darkness to the station. The guard held the train up long enough for us all to get aboard and when we sorted ourselves out, we were in a first-class compartment. The ~~compartment~~ the carriage was full of respectable people travelling north and God knows what they thought of this lunatic bunch of half-dressed, scruffy climbers invading their peace. One of the climbers was still clutching a frying-pan of sausages and his pal had a "dram" of tea. (This was Peter McGeach and Davie Wilson, though at that time I didn't know them.)

Getting the sausages and the tea up to the train intact was the most notable ~~achievement~~ achievement of the day as it turned out.

To the relief, I think, of the other travellers we all stumbled out at Tyndrum, the next station along the line, and it was still raining as heavy as ever.

Most of us had sense enough to bring along a dry change of clothing which the station master kindly allowed us to leave in his waiting-room, on the walls of which hung a certificate, "the Neatest Station in Scotland"

We sorted ourselves out and started out for Connish Farm from where the climb starts. Only two climbers were suitably dressed for driving sleet and rain. They were in oilskins and leggings. They were the only two to get onto the mountain at all, even a little bit.

We were walking right into driving sleet and were soon soaked to the skin. The burn just before Connish was by now a raging torrent, too deep to wade and too wide to jump. One member managed to jump to a rock, could'n't make the next one and barely managed to scramble back. An attempt to cross on the wire fence was also a failure when the fence sagged so much in the middle that the unfortunate pioneer was up to his waist in the river and desperately trying not to be swept away.

Enough was enough, and, soaking and chattering with ~~wet~~ cold, we called it a day. The ~~two~~ two lads in oilskins had got across much higher up the burn, but they, too, packed it in before really getting onto the mountain.

The return journey down the glen was no less miserable. The wind was now in our backs and we had to endure wet clothes plastered to our backs and legs. What a masochistic bunch we were!

Back at Tyndrum station we stripped off in the waiting room and

/and threw our wet gear onto the platform. One member, pouring the water out of his boots onto the platform, was heard to announce, "These boots are absolutely waterproof. Not a drop has got out."

Although we tried to keep the waiting-room as tidy as possible, the floor was soon a great pool of muddy water and we tried to avoid ~~in~~ seeing the certificate on the wall. "The Neatest Station in Scotland".... My Cawd!

We were still drumming-up at the waiting-room fire when the train came in. Only partially dressed, our bare feet stuck in wet boots and with armfuls of sodden clothes, we bundled into the guard's van. We even made a mess of it too.

The hostel was fine and warm and no wonder, the wise ones had been stoking up the fire all day. But after a huge meal we felt better and looking at the day objectively, we agreed it had been a wee bit of a disappointment.

As the evening wore on, more and more sodden clothes were draped around the stove and the oven filled with wet socks. Nobody complained of the steaming clothes and the smell of slowly, cooking wet stockings.

Among the late arrivals was a chap, Kempson, with some pupils from Marlborough House School in England. They went on to the C.I.C hut on Nevis and got a big write-up in the papers. Kempson had been on the 1936 Everest Expedition. He was a quiet, scholarly chap, full of ~~with~~ enthusiasm and easy to talk to. I had had a long chat with him before I learned who he was and wondered if I had been to brash,. I don't believe he did, for I'm sure he would recognise my enthusiasm too, and my inexperience.

The rain which had never let up since I arrived was as heavy as ever the next morning and nobody even suggested we go out. We just spent the day having one meal after another until it was time to catch the bus home in the evening.

Kempson had been persuaded to give a talk on his experiences, but, unfortunately, we had to leave before it.

In spite of the appalling weather and only managing two peaks I was keener than ever on the sport. It was also the beginning of the end to my solo wanderings on the hills.

My expenses for the week-end;

Train fare to Crianlarich.....	6/6p.
Return fare to Tyndrum....	1/5p.
Bus fare back to Glasgow.....	5/-.
Hostel charges....	2/3p.
Food....	2/-.

A total of seventeen shillings and twopence, less than a £.

My climbing boots had come apart ~~xxxx~~ after I got back from the New Year and were sent to the local cobbler for ~~resoling~~ re-soling. I spent the last Saturday of January nailing my boot. @ dozen clinkers, (edge nails) and a dozen muggers set me back about five shillings. Most people at that time nailed their own boots - at least, the ones I got to know did.

The next day, (Sunday), I was out to the Campsies. They were in deep snow and I made for a small ice and snow gully, anxious to put my new-won experience to practise. However, whilst climbing the gully, I pulled a column of ice smack into my face and skittered down to the bottom. It was a right hard knock, but I didn't think anything more of it at the time. It didn't spoil my day but two days ~~late~~ later I was almost literally climbing the walls with pain. It was at night, of course, and my poor parents were at their wits end trying to alleviate it. The next morning I learned from the dentist that I had smashed the roots of some teeth. They looked all right, but, with the roots all broken, they had to come out. The ~~few~~ following days were pretty miserable but the arrival of the ice-axe that I had ordered from Lillywhite's removed the gloom.

As soon as possible I was out again to the Campsies. The snow was still hard and I spent the day, happily, hacking steps up every steep snow patch I could find. But I was beginning to look down a little at the Campsies. I wanted to get onto the "Big Stuff."

The next Saturday, (17th. Feb. 1937.) I took the ~~late~~ bus to Arrocher. This was new ground to me and I took some time to find Glen Loin Hostel. There were only four members in the hostel but two of them, Jimmie Stevenson of the J.M.C.S and Alex Thompson, were to be my climbing companions the next day. Alex was a small, stocky chap and sported a big, drooping pipe in which he smoked the foulest of thick-black tobacco. Alex had all the gear and, to me, seemed a real experienced climber.

Tom Downie, the warden at that time, joined us at the stove later in the evening. Tom was, apparently, the wild boy of his well-to-do family; he had never been able to hold down any steady job, though he had had an excellent formal education; he had travelled very widely and he appeared to be quite without envy or ambition. He didn't worry about anything for, as he said, he had seen Chinese and Indians die of starvation, he had yet to see a white man die of starvation. This philosophy seemed to explain everything. He enjoyed the quietness of the hostel in winter and encouraged no one to ~~stay~~ stay.

Andy Gray of the H.F. dropped in later. He was staying at Ardgarten Hostel. Andy was the leading light and inspiration of the H.F. in Glasgow at that time - a tireless organiser but he liked to get away from his flock at times and keep up his contacts with the "hard crowd."

Later, just as we were getting off to sleep we heard a steady splashing from the toilets - a cistern overflowing and flooding the place. We talked it over and I was elected to go and inform the warden. I pulled on a jacket and dashed across to his hut. Outside it was blowing a gale and, when I eventually got Tom to hear my story, I was bluntly told that he could'nt do anything about it - he had no intentions of trying to do anything about, and would I get to Hell out of it. I did. By the time I got back to the hostel everybody was asleep. I awoke at the first light of dawn but had enough sense to enquire, very softly, if anybody was awake. No one was, of course, and I went back to sleep. Later, Alex and I got up, and Alex, with the aid of masses of paper and the contents of a paraffin lamp, got a great fire going. Alex seemed to me to know his way about. I was impressed, but it was Jimmie Stevenson who made an appearance when everything was going fine. I didn't notice that at the time.

After breakfast, we went up to the Arrocher Caves where Alex pointed out the various small caved and overhangs. Alex knew them all though he himself rarely if ever forsook the comfort of the hostel. (I learned this later.) In the main cave, the "Bridal Suite" was pointed out to me - a tiny ledge up in the left-hand corner and I was introduced to the Chimney Climb. I found it a bit of a struggle and very, very sooty. No wonder, for it was the outlet for the fire.

A favorite "lark" was to get a novice up into the chimney and when he got stuck at the "crux", light a smokey fire below him.

Jimmie Stevenson also had a go and could'nt make it, which made me feel very good. Alex, of course, never even tried it and it ~~seemed~~ ~~taxgaxaxaxaxax~~ was'nt noticed at the time. I only remembered it long after.

We carried on up the burn to the foot of A'Chrois Gully, which Alex knew well. Alex knew most places well, though never actually did very much himself.

We put in a strenuous bit of work with our ice axes on ice-pitches in the river. Alex was full of energy and expertise but was suddenly smitten with violent cramp and sickness when we reached the foot of the gully itself. (If Alex had said it was altitude sickness I would have believed him.) He said he would follow on later.

Jimmie and continued up the gully on our own. There had already been steps cut up the gully but had filled up with snow, and I was only too happy to cut steps on my own. The gully is quite steep but the snow was in excellent condition, and the climb straight forward. But this was my first winter gully with my own ice axe. I hewed out a veritable stair case up the gully. Alex had only to walk up leisurely when he recovered. Alex knew his way about, alright.

Once on the summit and Alex again in command, he led us unerringly/

/unerringly down the easy slopes to the glissades. Here on the gentle slopes, Alex shot off on a very professional-looking sitting glissade, and I followed.

My first attempt wasn't much of a success, but I soon got the hand of it. It was marvellous fun and we spent the rest of the afternoon sliding down every good snow slope, even repeating them over and over again when it was particularly exciting. Standing glissades weren't the fashion at that time. By the time we had finished, Alex had lost the seat of his trousers and mine were wafer thin.

Peter McGeoch and his friends were in the caves when we got down and, when we asked if it was them that we had seen glissading earlier on, they silently turned round. There wasn't a whole trouser seat among them.

On the subject of glissading, a great deal of thought and ingenuity went into the repairs of glissade-savaged trousers. Some favoured canvas or leather seats for wearing qualities; some swore by heavy oilskin or leatherette for toughness and reduce friction, i.e. to go faster. However, it was left to Johnnie Jack, whom I got to know later, to come up with the final answer. Johnnie had a rabbit-skin waistcoat which he wore for warmth when climbing in winter. But on the descent, when the snow conditions were favourable, Johnnie would take off his waistcoat, put his legs through the arm-holes and sit on the back ~~with~~ of it. He would then take off down the snow at a terrific speed. He had reduced friction drag to the minimum. Indeed, he was ~~often~~ generally air-bourne most of the time.

Alex and Jimmie left on an earlier bus. ~~However,~~ Alex left me a fill of his tobacco, which I thought was very kind, and I smoked it while waiting for my bus. And how miserably sick I was! I had never been as sick in my life, neither before nor since. Even the freezing night air didn't help, and I had the most miserable bus journey ever.

A few months later, I watched Jessie Norton, a Lomond Club member, smoke a pipeful for a bet - she didn't turn a hair.

I was off again the next Saturday, 6th. Mar. I caught the 4.30 p.m. for Arrocher again. Alex was on the bus along with Bill Bolton and wee Bill Corr and his girlfriend, Flo Campbell.

In the evening, ~~Bill Bolton~~ Alex and I walked up to the caves. The "Hard Crowd" were all there as usual - Peter McGeoch, Davie Wilson and their friends - Bill Corr and Flo were in the "Bridal Suite" and a great fire was blazing away. It looked very cosy and comfortable. They were a tough, independent crowd that used the caves in these days. Born and bred in Glasgow or Clydebank and just out of the "Hungry Thirties." Escapists! Maybe, but doing their own thing.

On Sunday, Bill Bolton, who was a member of the "Lomonds", introduced me to Johnnie Harvey, President and founder member of The Lomond Mountaineering Club.

Johnnie would be, I suppose, in his late thirties at the time - and that was old, but he was, without a doubt, one of the best known characters in climbing circles in and around Glasgow. Everybody seemed to know, or know of Johnnie Harvey and the "Lomonds."

His tremendous enthusiasm and obvious love of the hills fairly bubbled out of him and you just could'n't help but be infected by it.

Just how much "Johnnie Harvey and the Lomonds" - the names were synonymous- did for post-war climbing in Scotland will never, I fear, be properly documented. It was through his outstanding organising ability that we, ordinary working lads and lassies from Glasgow and Glasgow Clydebank, were able to get onto the hills regularly for a sport that had, hitherto, been only for the more affluent.

It was only natural for Johnnie to invite me to join Bill and himself for a day's climbing. I accepted gratefully and as I recall this first meeting, I wonder how many young, aspiring climbers have been so grateful to receive such an "open hearted" fr from Johnnie Harvey.

The climb Johnnie had in mind was on the N.E. face on A'Chrois, a gully he had noted previously. Johnnie was always noticing out-of-the-way places.

It was a fair walk round by Coiregragan but Johnnie was in no hurry - he never was - and would stop for a smoke and a blether any time.

As a beginner I listened avidly to his patter. Johnnie was the original "patter-merchant". He could charm any irate gamekeeper or land owner in no time at all and even have them showing us the best camp-sites. Many years later when I, and others too, should have outgrown Johnnie, we would still listen and be enthused by his charm.

It was a glorious sunny day, but in the gully it was sunless and freezing hard. The snow was hard-packed and in ideal condition. We started ~~xxxxxx~~ cutting steps almost immediately, but it was ~~straigh~~ straight forward until we reached the bottle-neck - frozen snow with a bulge of ice to cork the botthe-neck. Here we roped up and Johnnie started up, but at the bulge, he ran into difficulties. He could'n't make any impression on the ice, nor could he get any purchase above it. ~~I could~~ I could'n't even anchor myself securely enough to give Johnnie any support. Johnnie would alternately declare it impossible, then decide to have a last try.

This went on for the best part of an hour until a junk of ice broke off from the rocks to reveal a glorious hand grip in a crack. This was all that was ~~needed~~ needed and with a bit of moral support from me, Johnnie clawed his way over the bulge. Easier ground followed and Johnnie was able to secure an anchorage, but not before he used all 80 ft. of rope and Bill had had to come off the rope. I joined Johnnie as fast as possible, but Bill, who had been wedged in the gully below, was now

/now waist deep in the snow and ice that we had sent down. He was so frozen that he could barely tie himself onto the rope we sent down. He was brought up on a very tight rope.

The ice axes of that day were very long shafted. Ideal for securing a belay in deep snow, just the right height for sitting on and absolutely perfect for ~~glissading~~ glissading, but near useless for step-cutting on steep ice. Most of us soon realised this and cut a foot or more of the shaft.

We soon gained a fine broad ledge in the sun and thawed out. The direct route above the ledge was up an ice wall, which Johnnie, to my delight, allowed me to lead. I never completed it. The angle got steeper and steeper until my nose was nearly rubbing the ice and even my determination wasn't equal to it. However, Johnnie declared it impossible, allowing me to retreat without loss of dignity. We took the R/H. fork and reached the summit without any difficulty.

We hurried of the summit in search of glissade and at the first ~~xxx snow slope~~ snow slope I wish all my experience gained on the previous week-end, launched myself down with tremendous abandon. I was wearing a pair of rubberized over-trousers, friction rating near nil, and very soon reached take-off ~~xxx~~ speed. I lost all control, lost my axe and finished up feet first in ~~xxx snow~~ in soft snow, almost impaling myself on my own ice axe. It, too, had imbedded itself in the same soft snow, head first. What a headline for the daily papers! "Climber impales himself on his own ice axe. Was it suicide?"

Once off the snows, Johnnie took up his favourite subject, the Lomonds, with such enthusiasm that I was determined to join at the first opportunity. Johnnie unashamedly touted for members when he got a chance. I was wondering how long it would be before I could reach the standard required to join. Johnnie had a way of practically inviting you in, and then giving the impression that standards were very high and membership very restricted. He invited me out with the Club the following week-end. They had, he said, their own transport and I got the impression that I was being specially favoured. I gratefully accepted.

The next Saturday, 13th. Mar. 1937, I met the Club at a garage on the southside and we boarded the "Club Transport."

The "Club Transport" was an open lorrie, with a wooden frame built on the back, over which a tarpaulin had been thrown. Inside, a wooden seat ran along the back and down each side. The little floor space in the middle was left for the packs as well as any extra "bods" who turned up.

This was "Phinn's Express." The Lomond Mountaineering Club's own transport.

Comic perhaps, but, thanks to Harvie, away ahead of its time in organized Club transport, and a credit to his enthusiasm and organising skills. It was also cheap, inconspicuous and, I believe, illegal.

I met many more Lomonds for the first time. Bill Conn who was the clubs foremost rock-climber, Bill Wassel, Hugh "Ginger" Robinson, Johnnie Jack and Frankie Ruff, who along with Harvie, referred to their current girl-friends as "snuggle-pups".

As usual, we were late in leaving, 8 p.m., and only made Ardgarten Hostel at Arrocher.

I slept in the back of the lorrie, thus saving a "bob" in the hostel, as did Harvie. The others stayed in the Hostel.

For once everybody seemed keen for an early start and members made a noisy exit from the hostel at 6 a.m. This, of course, did little good for the Club's reputation, but the members were never very, good Hostellers, using the hostels as a matter of convenience and avoiding all duties with consummate skill and single-minded determination.

We went back up L. Lomond and stopped in the Falloch, where we all climbed An Casteal.

On the way up, some members took the opportunity to get in some glissading practice and one of them managed, on a very gentle slope, to lose control and slash his head on his ice-axe. What was remarkable, was, not that he should do it on an easy slope, but that someone actually had a bandage with them.

Higher up we split up into separate parties and I went along with Bill Wassel and Hugh Robinson. We spent such a long time playing on an ice wall that, by the time we made the summit, everybody was on their way down. It was bitterly cold and we didn't dwell long. However, on the descent we found a long open gully which made a superb glissade. ~~Suggest~~ So good in fact that we laboured up for a second try. Big Hugh even went up for a third.

We had to hurry on to catch up on the rest, and hurry, to Hugh, meant running at full belt.

I had enjoyed the week-end immensely, we all did, but it marked the beginning of a long association with the "Lomonds".

I note, from my diaries, that I was given a £20 raise in my salary, an annual raise, of course, and immediately looked about for more climbing gear.

I was off again the following Saturday, (20th Mar. 1937), this time with Russel Marshall. We got off to an early start from Glen Loin Hostel on the Sunday and went up the Cobbler corrie, over the bealach, and on to Ben Ime. Snow conditions were perfect and the ascent of the Fan Gully was straightforward, but very pleasant.

It was a beautiful, clear day and the views, especially looking south down the Clyde estuary, were fantastic.

We returned to the hostel via Narnain and down the Sugach.

A long, but not too strenuous day and I really felt that I was going places.

Easter, 1937.

Stopped work at 3p.m. and managed to get home and back into town, in time to catch the 5.30 p.m. train to Dalmally, where I joined Russel Marshall and Duncan MacGillivray in the Hostel.

We got away to an early start on the Saturday and climbed Ben Lui by the Central Gully. It was an awful long walk up the ~~glen~~ glen and over the bealach to the gully, but the gully was packed with fine, hard snow and presented no problems.

On the summit, we sun-bathed for a couple of hours, before returning to the road over Ben A'Clee. We were lucky and got a lift back to Dalmally. Otherwise it would have been a very, long day.

In the evening, I had a walk with Hugh Robinson and Bill Conn of the Lomonds.

We had an ambitious programme for the Sunday, all the peaks on the Cruachan Range, and managed to be up by 5 a.m.. The railway line was the shortest route across the Orchy and we were on the first peaks of the Horseshoe just as the sun was coming up. Snow conditions were perfect and we made great time. Coming off Cruachan, itself, and making for Stob Dearg we met a long streamer of the H.F., neatly divided into little, separate parties. The last party informed that they were group "G". We must have looked "the real thing" to them, for the girls were all excited and only too anxious to share their chocolate and other goodies.

And trailing along behind them all was the shepherd, Andy Gray, enthusiastic as ever and, perhaps, a wee bit apologetic.

The H.F. party had just come down off Stob Dearg and left a veritable field of pot-holes in the snow. By the time we made our descent, the sun had gone off the snows and the lot had frozen up. We glissaded down over it, and it was a bumpy ride, I can tell you.

We reached the road by the Falls of Cruachan and faced up to an eight mile slog home in the darkness. We had been away 14 hours. We were knackered when we reached the Hostel, but it had been a classic winter ridge walk and we were very pleased with ourselves.

In our absence, the hostel filled up and I slept on the common-room floor.

Easter Monday, and we really had to drag ourselves out. However, we still managed to climb Ben Eunaich and Beinn a'Chochaill and get back in time to catch the train home to Glasgow.

I had arranged with Hugh Robinson at Easter to meet him the following Saturday and we got the 3.40 p.m. bus to Callander. From Callander we headed up the glen, past the Bracklin Falls, towards Arivuriardich,

We caught up with another couple of lads before we reached the farm. They, Fortunately, had torches, for they, too, were going over the hills to Dubh Choirein, a bothy over the bealach. I didn't know where the bothy was, and Hugh, who did, never thought of torches.

We had barely started over the bealach in the darkness, when the mists came down. We soon lost the path, missed the cairn on the bealach and when we reached the river on the other side, none of them knew if ~~they~~ we were above or below the bothy. We were soaked to the skin. the river was in high flood and one of the torches had conked out.

However, we were in a no-return situation. We had to get across the river and find the bothy. The flickering torch didn't reveal very much, perhaps, just as well, but we selected the least fiercesome part of the river and just waded in. We were waist-deep and scrabbling all over the place, but we all made it. No one, of course, had a rope. Anyway, we soon found Dubh Choirien, for it was already occupied and welcome lights were flickering from the windows.

Dubh Choirien, in those days, was a superb "doss". It had two rooms, a table and benches, a small supply of fire-wood. That night, no 4 star hotel could have been more welcome. When the eight of us finally turned in for the night, we neatly filled the width of the room- nicely and cosily jammed together.

The Sunday morning was miserable - a howling gale and driving rain. We had a good "drum up and sat around a bit but soon got restless. Dubh Choirien, which had looked suvh a wonderfuk place the night before, now looked dark and cramped. Eventually Hugh and I, and two others, got into our damp clothes and climbed Ben Vorlich and Stac a'Chroin for want of something to do. It was wet, cold, misty and thoroughly miserable and we were back in Dubh Choirein without a stop.

After a quick meal we returned over the bealach to Callander ~~at~~ at what Hugh was pleased to call a "a brisk pace", which meant that we ~~pract~~ ran practically all the way.

Still keeping up an unbroken succession of week-ends, I was off on the Saturday, (10th. Apl. 1937.) with Russel Marshall and Duncan McCulloch, travelling in the unaccustomed comfort of Duncan's car.

We ~~went~~ up to Crianlarich Hostel. It was dull and not very promising, but Sunday was fine and sunny. We went along the Killin road and then climbed Stobinian by the East side. A long plod, and soft snow on the final stretches but excellent glissaded down the North side to the Ben More burn. A leisurely day in fine warm weather, and thoroughly enjoyable.

The following Saturday I was away again, this time with Hugh Robinson to Arrocher. Bill Conn was supposed to join us, but didn't make it. However, Bill Bolton was on the bus.

We had a "drum up" in the hostel before walking up Glen Lion to Coiregrogain, where we camped. Big Hugh and I shared my "Guinea Minor" and wee Bill had his own tent. It rained heavily throughout the night and the morning dawned dank and misty.

We left our packs in the barn at Coiregrogain and headed up Ben Vane, Hugh setting the pace as usual. We could see nothing in the mist, and it was a case of up to the summit and down again as fast as possible.

Hugh was in his kilt, having only discovered at Coiregrogain that he had left his breeches at home. It didn't deter him from having whatever glissades we could find on the descent, but he was forced to admit hadn't been all that comfortable. On the lower slopes, Hugh plunged down into the mists at a run and had already started to "drum up" when Bill and I got down.

We had to hare back to Arrocher for the bus. Wee Bill was about on his knees. He was more accustomed to going along with Harvie, when everything was at a nice, leisurely pace and lots of rests. With Hugh in the party, it had been a week-end "at the double". Even I, who was no slouch on the wixx hills, found Hugh's pace hard going.

Off to Glen Coe with the ~~L.M.C.~~ L.M.C. (24th. Apl. 1937.) on their Official Meet. An Official Meet merited Official Transport and "Phinn's Express" was brought into commission.

Harvie had got everybody rounded up by 6 p.m. and we made Glen Etive by 10 p.m.

Bill Conn and I camped on a narrow ledge just below the Copal Bridge, a site just big enough for one tent and with an impressive drop into the river. The "Guinea Minor" fitted perfectly. The rest found sites further down the Etive.

On the Sunday, the mists were low down on the Buachaille Etive. Bill thought that Great Gully might give a decent snow climb, but it proved disappointing.

However, the wind started to blow and the mists started to clear. Spasmodically at first, like someone drawing back a curtain for a moment, allowing fleeting glimpses down to the Glen Coe road and across the Rhannoch Moor. It gave a wonderful impression of height.

We sat on the summit until the mist had all gone and descended to the Crowberry Tower. A large party were abseiling off the Tower, so Bill led round to the lowest rocks of the Tower and we roped up.

Bill was in the lead, of course, as my rock-climbing had been confined to the Campsies, and made the first two, short pitches easily. We weren't on a recognised route and ran into difficulties after that.

Bill eventually conceded defeat and I bowed to his experience. (Many years I completed this route with Jimmie Hainning without great difficulty. But, of course, by then I had a great deal more experience than Bill.)

Having admitted defeat, we abseiled off the rocks. We used, in these days, thick Manilla hemp ropes and abseiling was done by passing the double rope through your legs and up over your shoulder. It could be an uncomfortable business and, if you got the sequence wrong, it was down-right hazardous. You could end up ~~upside~~ upside down on the rope. Moreover, the rope was simply hooked over a spike of rock. On this occasion, as in so many other occasions, the rope refused to come off the belay when we were down. Bill had to climb up again, unhook the rope, and climb DOWN. I've done this so many times myself since then.

We descended by the Curved Ridge at a fast pace.

It had been a wonderfully, exciting day for me and we found our company with each other entirely suitable. It was the beginning of a good friendship, but ended with Bill's death in a bomber during the war.

However, by the time we got back to the Copal Bridge everyone was packed up, and we ~~maxx~~ had to forego a meal.

Harvie, Bill Bolton and Frankie Ruff had a ~~leisurely~~ leisurely day in some gully on Sron na Creise, - Johnnie's party always had leisurely days. Hugh, Jimmie Hainning and Bill Wassel had a great, but far from leisurely day on Clachlet ridge, - no one got off easily in Hugh's parties. The rest of the club were scattered about on various excursions. Only Bill and I had done any rock climbing, but, as Bill was custodian of the Club's only rope, it couldn't be otherwise.

However, the highlight of the weekend, for me at least, came as we gathered round the lorrie ready to go home. Bill Conn put up my name for membership.

At that time, membership was only by invitation, a certain standard of proficiency was required, (Johnnie was somewhat arbitrary on this requirement, though he didn't hesitate to bend it when he thought fit,) and finally, a unanimous vote was obligatory. I gathered that these rules were written into the constitution to ensure that members were of the right calibre.

Johnnie considered the nomination and, after checking carefully that there were sufficient members present to call an Extraordinary General Meeting, led the members round the other side of the van to deliberate on this issue. He reappeared almost immediately to ~~say~~ inform me that my nomination had been seriously considered and that I had been elected "anonymously". (Johnnie never could get it right).

He announced the decision with great dignity, as if he was bestowing a knighthood on me, and welcomed me into the Club. Johnnie really did believe it was an honour to join the "Lomonds", and I have to say that I felt the same way about it.

So, six weeks after meeting Johnnie Harvie for the first time, I became a member of The Lomond Mountaineering Club. I had arrived.

After nine consecutive week-ends away I gave myself a break, but even then I was out on the Campsie on the ~~Sunday~~ Sunday with an old school-friend and skating companion, Robert Boyd.

However, I was off again the following Saturday with Jimmie Hainning and Hugh to Arrocher. We walked round to Ardgarten Hostel and camped down by the loch-side, where we had an enormous fire. Later, we were joined by Tom Reid and Bill Lynch, Club Members. It was a glorious night and soon a great crowd of the out-door ~~crowd~~ fraternity was gathered around the fire, including some J.M.C.S bods whom we knew.

But the Sunday was cold, dank and misty, though not enough to stop us from trudging up the Cobbler. We made a token ascent of a bit of the Moderate Route on the S. Peak, carried ~~on~~ up to the Needle where we called it a day.

~~Without~~ Though visibility was almost nil, we had no trouble finding the col between the Centre and the North peak, and although it is steep, it's a straight-forward and fast descent. The others knew this so we all just followed Hugh as he plunged down into the mist. It was whilst we were ~~whopping~~ whooping our way down that we passed a party clinging desperately to the steep grass slope. We were well past them and into the mist again before one of us belatedly suggested that, perhaps, they were in trouble. Indeed they were - and terrified too. Five bods suddenly appearing out of the mist and disappearing again in seconds had done nothing for their moral. In shorts, sandals and open-necked shirts, this quartette, two boys and two girls, were pathetically grateful when we offered to help them down.

The others, with greater experience in these matters, appropriated the girls and the more mobile of the boys and disappeared into the mist. I was left to ~~struggle~~ struggle down with the other boy who clung onto me all the way, repeating tearfully, "I'll never go up a mountain again, never." I wonder if he ever did.

At the Shelter Stone, now well below the mist, I caught up with the ~~other~~ others and we got rid of our charges.

We spent the rest of the afternoon climbing, and falling off the Boulder. A pleasant week-end with little or nothing achieved.

Back again to ~~Arrocher~~ Arrocher the following Saturday, (15th. May, 1937). A good turn out of members and we camped up at the Shelter Stone. In contrast to the previous week-end, the weather was perfect. We were up early the next morning, eager to get onto the rocks. Hugh and I fairly scampered over the Moderate Route and over to the N. Peak.

Jimmie Hainning joined us and I took over the lead on the 100 ft Climb. and then onto the RightAngle Gully. I was delighted to be allowed to lead these climbs and from then, until I teamed up with Peter McGeoch later, I was hardly again to follow on a rope.

Jack Nimlin, already a legend, was climbing the Cat Crawl, which Andy Lavery had pioneered shortly before.

Sat. 22n. May, 1937. Club Meet, Arran.

Took the 9a.m. train and got the boat across to Brodwick. Danny McGovern was supposed to join me but didn't show up.

At Brodick I walked on and up Glen Rosa, where I was told the Club would be camping when they arrived.

I had a "drum-up" in the woods up the glen, "cached" my pack in the woods and carried on up the glen, ostensibly for a short walk. However, scrambling across slabs and up boulders, I was up on the ridge without being aware of it. I was so impressed with the ridge and the views ahead that I just had to carry on. Climbing along the rough granite ridge was a pure delight and, though alone, I was ~~enjoying~~ enjoying every minute of it. I was over Ben Tarsuinn and onto Ben Nuis when the weather broke down.

I was soaked by the time I got back and retrieved my pack. I was hoping to see the club tents as I walked back down the glen. I got down to the farm without ~~meeting any members~~ meeting any members, so with the farmer's permission, I changed into dry clothes, left my pack and started back to Brodick. I had only gone a short distance when I found them all, comfortably established in a barn, - one of Johnnie's many howfs.

When the weather cleared later in the evening, we all walked down to Brodick, but when we returned to the "doss", the rats had taken over. Rats of all sizes that scurried around the barn and peered at us out of the darkness. It was a good, dry, comfortable "doss", and none of us minded the rats. Just the same, night found us all camped up the glen among the whin bushes.

Sunday dawned warm and sunny and we set off in various parties, some to Goat Fell others to ~~Chir~~ Cir Mhor whilst five of us went onto Achir. May and Jessie, the only lady members, and myself went to have a look at Achir Gully. May, the tiniest member in the club, opted to walk round and up to the top, but Jessie and I decided to "have a go". I laboured long in the left fork, ("impossible" in the Guide book.) I couldn't make it "go", so we switched to the right fork. The first bit was over unpleasant vegetation, ~~followed by loose, and equally unpleasant, rock~~ followed by loose, and equally unpleasant rock. We abandoned the gully and took to the left wall. The rock was steep but sound and the holds, though small, were ample. However, the last short pitch was over a near-holdless bulge of rock. I found it very "dicey"/

/dicey, and I even accepted a steadying hand from May who was sitting at the top. It was moral support at its best, for May weighed around 7 stone- with her boots on.

We were to meet Hugh and Jimmie on Beinn Tarsuin but ended up having a look at Ben Nuis Chimney, at that time still unclimbed.

It is a deep, smooth-sided cleft, with several jammed boulders, the first about 15-20 feet up. The only method of attack that I could think of was to "back and Foot" up. It was almost too wide for this caper but I heaved and grunted my way up until I was a couple or ~~feet~~ so feet from the first chockstone. There my strength gave out. I could hold myself in position, if my knees didn't buckle, but I couldn't move another inch up. Why I never thought of slinging the rope over the chockstone I don't know. I was pretty new to the game.

I slithered back down and we abandoned any further thought of gullies. Joining Hugh and Jimmie, we spent the rest of the day scrambling along the Achir, Cir Mhor ridge in glorious sunshine.

Plans for the Monday were ambitious, but the weather turned foul and all plans were abandoned. Bill, Frankie and I were sent off to Brodick to get rolls. We spent the princely sum of twelve shillings on cold ham, fruit, biscuits, bread and buns, and forgot the rolls.

We got the 6 p.m. boat from Brodick and, getting a carriage to ourselves on the train, we had another big "drum-up".

May 29th. 1937.

Met Cyrle Johnson., Bill Wassel, Bill Bolton at the Shire Bridge and went up to the Shelter Stone.

On the Sunday Bill Wassel and I went onto the Cobbler. The weather was poor and getting worse by the minute. We climbed the Moderate on Jean but by the time we got round to the North Peak it was raining heavily.

I climbed the Right-Angle Direct but couldn't find the vital grip on the final stretch. Bill had to hare round to the top and lower a rope to me. I hadn't put on a rope as Bill had firmly declined to even try it. Being wet, cold and miserable, we, perversely, ended the day by climbing the Recess Route, which neither of us enjoyed.

Sat. 5th. June, 1937.

With a week's holiday in front of us, Jim, my brother and I joined the Club to Glen Coe.

There was a good turn out of members, eleven of us, plus Alex Thomson and my brother. I noted in my diary at the time that it had been a pleasant journey. I must have been thinking relatively, for I never remember a comfortable journey with twelve of us crushed into the back of "Phinn's Express". Harvie, of right always travelled in the front.

We camped in the trees at Achtriachatan in a half-gale and on the/

/the Sunday it was wet and the hills shrouded in mist - a typical Glen Coe day.

Bill Wassel, Hugh and Jimmie went onto Aonach Eagach Ridge, Harvie, Bill Bolton and Frankie Ruff set off for Aonach Dubh, but retreated to Clachaig Bar.

G. Guild, my brother and I ambitiously set off to do the Church Door Buttress. After much upward meanderings in the mist, we reached what we thought might be the Buttress and roped up. I was well started up the rocks when the mist cleared momentarily and I saw Collie's Pinnacle on my right. We were, of course, on the Diamond Buttress. We retreated and crossed over to the Church Door, looked at it and started back down. It was that sort of day.

The Club left home, leaving Jim and I to continue our Holiday.

~~Thurs~~~~Sunday~~ As so often happens, Monday dawned bright and sunny and we got an early lift up to the Study. We made the ridge of Aonach Eagach quickly and easily and traversed the whole ridge leisurely. After the rains the visibility was wonderful and Jim, who had never been on a mountain before, was enthralled. The weather changed suddenly as we reached the last peak on the ridge and it hail-stones and heavy rain back to our tent.

The next morning, it was still raining as hard as ever so we packed up and headed for Fort William. We were lucky and got a lift all the way to the Fort and walked up to Downie's Hostel at Achintee Farm.

Downie's Hostel was an ~~institution among climbers~~ institution among climbers, privately owned and run the way we liked things, i.e. no rules whatever. Mr. Downie had formerly been the warden of the old Glen Nevis Youth Hostel until it burned down, and the same happened to to this one. After the second fire they moved to a big house in Kinlocheil.

Danny McGovern, who was idle at the time, was staying with the Downie's. There was some vague idea that, in return for his tobacco and keep, he would help Downie with the extensions. But Danny was allergic to work, and seemed to spend all his time sitting by the stove, drinking endless cups of tea. The Downie's didn't seem to mind this.

Also staying at the hostel was Frank Paddy and his assistant who were doing a geographical survey from Ben Nevis.

On the Wednesday, in good weather, Jim and I walked over to the C.I.C. Hut and climbed Nevis by the Observatory Ridge. I had never been on a climb of such length, but it was straightforward and just the right thing for Jim, who had never been on a rope before. He found it no problem and was very, very pleased with himself. We were very slow and it was 7 p.m. when we reached the summit.

Just as we got on the summit, Frank Paddy's assistant was getting heliographed signals from Ben Lawers. This, he told us, wrapped up ~~his~~ their job on Nevis.

On Thursday Jim got the chance of a run out to Mallaig with another climber, so Danny and I settled down for a lazy day. Danny loved lazy days.

We were settling down nicely when word was brought into the Hostel that Frank Paddy was stuck a mile up the path with a stubborn pony. He had been going up to the summit to bring down their gear now that their job was done. The pony, we were informed, would neither go on nor come down again.

I was sent up to bring the beast back and given a ~~small~~ small bag of oats, and a big stick. The wretched animal ate the oats and only consented to come down when the "big stick" was applied.

Young Murial Downie made a very profitable business from taking tourists up the Ben on the ponies. She had already taken ~~away~~ a pony, laden with batteries, on to the summit and brought a load down - in the darkness and without a torch. She was very capable and not yet 16 years old.

Tourists, who wanted to do it on the cheap, could hire the ponies without a guide. Very few of them ever made the summit this way. The ponies almost always stopped at the first bridge and, either refused to go any further, or simply turned about and plodded home.

The following day, Murial had a Dutch couple to take to the summit, and I was engaged to bring down the rest of Paddy's gear. It sounded like a good lark, especially, as I was getting paid for it.

I was in the lead with the pack-pony and Murial followed, leading the Dutch couple. At that time of the year, the path was swarming with tourists, and, as I had dressed for the occasion in climbing gear and a Tyrolean hat, (on loan from wee Bill Corr,) there were gangs of photographers waiting at every corner on the path, anxious to record on film "the Guide on Ben Nevis". I fairly lapped all this up.

It was a long, tiring trip to the summit, but the ponies never balked, (thanks, I suppose, to Murial's presence). From the way the Dutch couple were shifting about in their saddles, the trip up had'n't ~~been~~ been all that comfortable for them either.

Frank Paddy had left a mountain of gear on the summit, batteries, lamps, tarpaulins, spade, pick-axe and sundry other warm clothing. I ~~distributed the heavy~~ distributed the heavy stuff evenly in the panniers and piled the rest over the poor pony. You could almost see its legs buckling, and it should have been obvious that it was too much for one pony. However, I didn't know any better and reckoned that if I got it all on the pony and it was still standing, it could carry it. Murial must have been too concerned about the Dutch couple, because she didn't pay any attention.

Murial was descending at a good pace, since the Dutch couple had opted to walk down, and my poor pony just followed.

WE, my pony and I, were still well above the half-way lochen when it became obvious that I had made a very, poor job with the load. The pony looked like a badly decorated Xmas tree about to fall over. I unloaded most of the gear, re-distributed it as best I could- and it still looked a mess.

However, I could think of nothing further to do and started downhill again, the poor pony staggering along behind me and showing its displeasure by trying to take a bite out of my arm or shoulder every now and then. Soon it gave up this game and was reduced to grunting with each step. In this fashion we ~~continuously~~ continued ~~laboriously~~ laboriously until the pony cast a shoe. By this time, I had run out of ideas. I thought of abandoning the animal, but it looked so pathetic standing there with its head drooping and by this time the hill was empty of people. In despair, I shoved the shoe on top of the load and dragged the beast along behind me. In this fashion we slowly ~~progressed~~ progressed until we reached the soft ground on the bealach. Here the pony stopped, gave a weary sigh and slowly, so slowly, collapsed.

In my first panic I thought the animal had broken a leg, but then I noticed that it was now contentedly eating the grass in front of it. In a more relieved frame of mind, I started to unload the gear and was half way through this operation when the pony heaved itself to its feet, unending me on my back in the process. It was now clear to me what the distribution of the load was to be. Accordingly I put on one greatcoat, slung a couple of army jackets over one shoulder, an enormous tarpaulin over the other, tucked a spade under my arm and started off again.

This was now much more to the pony's liking, It was now I ~~xxxx~~ who was buckling at the knees and grunting at each step and barely able to keep in front of the beast.

It became a nightmare journey, and where the hillside below the path was at its steepest, the pony, quite deliberately, came up beside me and pushed me over the edge. And patiently stood there and watched me gather up my scattered load, item by item. I later dropped a jacket and had to ~~xxxxx~~ wearily climb back up the path to retrieve it. At no time did the pony try to continue on its own, being content to turn its head and watch me - that pony had an evil eye.

The loss of a shoe hadn't bothered the pony one little bit and we eventually reached the Hostel with the pony in front dragging me along.

It had taken us 11 hours and I reckoned I had earned every penny of the ten shillings which was my fee.

I had arranged to me the club at Arrocher for the weekend. The lad who had taken my brother to Mallaig offered to take me to Tarbet on his pillion, not a pillion really, just a luggage carrier with my sleeping bag as a cushion. It was a miserably, uncomfortable journey and we had to make frequent stops whilst I lay on my stomach at the roadside to ease the pain in my backside. It was wonderful to leave Neil at Tarbet and walk over to Arrocher.

I met the Club camping at Ardgarten, but I was too crippled to join them on the Cobbler on the Sunday. I just lazed around the fire and recovered.

Jim, my brother, had returned to Glasgow in comfort, by train.

Fri. 12th June 1937

J.

Bill Wessel got the 7.15 pm bus to Balloch and, after walking to the Shore B, got a lift to the Torfado Range @ Arrocher. We walked up in the darkness & slept in the Shelter Stone.

Saturday was miserably wet & we descended to Ardgarten to find some of the Club. Meeting no one, we climbed back to the Shelter Stone. Just below it, though Robinson & Jim & Haining were camping. They had come up on the Friday, like ourselves, but we hadn't seen them in the mist.

We slept for a while in a Gorse tent that night. - Top & Tail - Cramped but warm. We managed to set the tent down on fire on the Sunday morn -

Still raining but, without any great enthusiasm, we climbed the usual run on routes on the Cobbles.

12th June 1937

The Cobbler again, but very wet & nothing much done - Bill Conn & I finalised plans to go to the Cullins in July.

July 3RD 1937.

Back again to Arrochar & Campy at
Ardgaten. Big fire down by shore; tented
Jimie Haunings & I to sleep out round the
fire. Torrential rain spoiled this
romantic play & we had hastily bed room
in the other members tents.

I had just bought a new pair of
Beva boots heavily nailed in No 13.
Tucummi - a formidable combination
of nailing - and was anxious to try
them out.

Sunday was dry & sunny & I
couldn't get onto the Cobble fast enough.

We did the most of the routes and
the boots were great - heavy but
they really cut into the rock.

Fri. 9th July 1937.

This was the start of the week's holiday in Skye that Bill Conn & I had been planning for months.

Skye was the dream for all rock-climbers in these days. - the mecca for climbers. - and a long way away.

It had been arranged that I should meet Bill @ Sligachan Inn - even the name was exciting.

With an enormous pack - - - - -tuned for a week plus - tent etc. (Fortunately, we didn't carry the mass of iron mangers of today's climbers, I got the 7.30pm bus to Dalloch. In the euphemism of that time, I was making my own travel arrangements & got a lift immediately to Tarbert.

I hadn't walked much further up the lochside when I got another lift to Tyndrum.

It was now getting dark, but I had to keep going. Skye was still a long, long way off. However, my luck held and a taxi stopped & caught up with me.

The taxi-driver never actually stopped - just slowed up sufficiently to signal me aboard. He was thoroughly disgusted at being called out at that time of night. Being a Friday night, it had probably spoiled his night @ the pub. But his heart was in the right place.

1937

It was now past mid-night, but, with the sort of good luck I was having, I sat on the Bridge for my next lift.

Soon a car stopped and a soured-faced bloke grudgingly invited me in. He didn't appear to give me a lift.

He opened the conversation by saying, "I swore I'd never give another fike a lift". I didn't think that remark required an answer, and, after a silence, he added, "Yes, a friend of mine says the same".

A long silence followed, not that I minded and we were eating up the miles. I was contentedly dozing when my companion suddenly asked, "Have you read any of Neil Munro's books?"

From the tone of his question, I had a feeling he just wanted the answer I gave him which was, "No, I haven't".

He fairly exploded now, "What!", he said "for 'and you call yourself a Scot, what do you think about when you walk? Everybody should read Neil Munro's Books. It's terrible going then' Scotland and not having read Neil Munro's books".

My awful admission kept him rattling away happily till we got to Glen Coe village, and I happily left him. - However, a lift is a lift.

It was now 2 AM, but I still had a vague hope of "Drummond the Carver" so I walked on along the Kinlochleven Road,

I stopped for a chat with an 'tinker' who was still sitting by his fire just off the roadside. He 'burned' a pipe of tobacco & praised my choice.

He seemed to me to be having the best out of life. (in such contrast to my previous companion.) Sitting by his fire, perfectly content and letting the world go by.

He would have talked the night away, I'm sure, but I left him in case I should miss get another lift.

However, after a few miles, I gave it up & 'dossed' behind a bridge.

I didn't start 'litching' till after 8am, but was at 'Downie's' Hostel in Glen Nevis just before midday.

1937
July, Sunday. Spent a lazy day in the Hostel but in the evening word came in that a Greek & his Spanish wife had not yet come down of the Ben.

A couple of English lads, & a girl from the Moray Mountaineering Club (may be something or other) & I set off up the Ben to help out. Our rations was one packet of fruit cake.

We met the unhappy couple well up the path, sore-footed & very tired. But otherwise O.K. The Spanish lady was in sandals & paying the price for it.

1937

Having got this far ourselves, and seeing that the couple needed no help, we instructed them to tell the Downies that we were carrying on to the Summit. From the Half-way lochan we watched a perfectly, glorious sunset & by midnight were on the Summit of Ben Nevis.

Our first task was to get a big fire going from the ample supply of old timber from the ruined Observatory.

It was a long wait till dawn & the night was chilly. We carefully rationed our own fruit cake, & kept the fire stoked up and sparingly shared out May's packet of cigarettes.

As a diversion I evolved as many routes & combinations of routes on the Observatory walls, and had just completed a complete traverse of it when, at 4 AM, a shout went up, "The Dawn."

It was, of course, 'the false dawn' and as quickly disappeared again. There was another brief attempt before the real dawn broke. — and what a dawn.

It was the most enthralling sight I had seen, and the four of us gathered silently at the edge of the cliffs, and drank in the sheer wonder of it. Here we were, the only four people in Britain, on its highest mountain to witness this spectacle. It made us feel very fortunate, but very insignificant.

With the full light of day we all felt in great spirits. The two lads, who were only "walkers" were instructed to keep to the path, whilst May & I, happily scampered down the scree of the Red Burn, which we did with great abandon. At the half-way we smoked the last two cigarettes that May had hoarded, & were back at Dore's @ 6pm.

The following day (Tuesday) May & I took a couple of Irish lads up the Ben. We intended to go on to Carn Uile Dearg, once we saw the Irish lads to the summit,

Unfortunately, the summit was in thick mist, but we saw the lads started down the well-marked path. However, May & I couldn't find the way down to the arête and, after some fruitless searching, abandoned the idea & descended again by the Red Burn.

We had been in the Hostel, perhaps, an hour when the two Irish lads arrived down, and we could hear them telling Mr Downie that, "Harry & the girl won't be down for a while yet." Their amazement when they saw us sitting by the fire was a delight.

On the Wednesday, the two English lads, Bill & Dick, decided to take out two hill ponies and musical Downie & I went out saddle them up. From experience I knew this wasn't always the easiest of tasks. The ponies roamed around the lower slopes near Aclintee farms quite freely in summer and most of them valued their freedom very much.

Musical caught one almost immediately but the rest refused to co-operate.

All four of us were now scrambling around to try and bunch them together so that we could herd them into the sheep-fank.

This went on for an exhausting spell until we got most of them into the sheep-fank. ~~We now decided to~~ One of them was a mean-eyed beast & this, Musical & I, decided should be selected for the boys. Accordingly, we carefully let the rest out one by one. The pony, now left on its own, really got cross. It backed away from us, charged around the fank and then in a fit of sheer bad temper, it kicked down the gate & fled.

We started all over again & in time got them corralled again.

Dick was left in charge of the gate, with instructions to let the ponies out one at a time.

However, this time the whole herd made a concerted rush at the gate.

and ~~Bill~~ Dick, ~~so~~ frantically was
shouting in an attempt to stop them,
stuck it out as long as he dared
and then dived out behind the wall.

We started the whole process yet
again. We eventually got one
left in the tank.

But he was now in the foulest
of tempers. He would stand quiescent
enough till you got within a foot
or two of him, then back would go
his ears and he would be at
you, bared teeth snarling like
Castro's.

We all had a try, and soon
everyone had their own escape
route over the wall.

This went on for hours, each getting
great encouragement from the others
and loud yells when we fled
back over the wall.

Eventually, we got the beast ~~peened~~
penned up in the narrow passage
leading into the sheep dip, where he
could neither go forward or backwards.

Then I leapt down onto his back
& grabbed him by the ears. I think
I had some idea that, if I could keep
his ears up, he wouldn't be so
damned bad-tempered. And strange
enough it seemed to work, for we got
a trifle on him, and he ~~docilely~~
was perfectly docile after that.

However, Bill & Dick decided that they